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ABSTRACT

A series of supervisory behavior studies that began at Mississippi State University in 1980 are summarized. The studies were instigated because of interest in effective supervision and dissatisfaction with an indepth literature search of supervision literature. The theories disclosed were fragmentary, contradictory, and impractical for use by practicing supervisors; research studies were obscure and not easily generalized to other populations. After years of struggling with conventional theories of motivation and satisfaction, the theories of Frederick Herzberg and Thomas J. Sergiovanni were chosen as most applicable. The paper describes three instruments used in the studies: an ordinal scale, a semantic differential, and the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), recently developed for use with student teachers and their supervising teachers. The nine studies summarized investigate teachers' preference for certain supervisory behaviors or their perceptions of various supervisory styles. A few studies examine the relationship between perceived supervisory behavior and job satisfaction. Results are mixed, but generally favor a collaborative management style for principals. The SBDQ is praised as an invaluable means of collecting and interpreting data about supervisory behavior. Twenty references are included. (MLH)

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STUDIES OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOR

Presented by
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At
The Fortieth Annual Conference Of
The National Conference Of Professors Of
Educational Administration
At
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff Arizona
August 1986

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INTRODUCTION

This presentation is a summary of a series of investigations of supervisory behavior begun by Walter Sistrunk at Mississippi State University in 1980. One of these studies was presented at NCPEA in Seattle in 1981. Two other studies were presented at San Marcos in 1982. A fourth study was presented at Missoula in 1983 and another at Orono in 1984. Some nine studies are included in this summary.

The presenter was a student advisee of the late Kimball Wiles. His interest in effective supervisory behavior began when he was working with Wiles and substituting for him in his supervision classes. The literature in the field of supervision seemed to be characterized by lack of either a solid theoretical or research base and by lack of agreement among the experts. Supervision is still more often characterized by wishful thinking, wistful dreaming, polemicising, and lack of

agreement than it is by solid research evidence, attention to political and social reality, or workable theory.

Interest in the tasks of supervision and those behaviors of supervisors which are most often effective in achieving the legitimate objectives of supervision led the presenter to in-depth search of the literature for better theory and more substantial research. Most theories are fragmentary, contradictory, illogical and impractical for use by practicing supervisors. The search for useful research was not much more fruitful. Much of it is miniscule, obscure, and incapable of generalization to other populations. Over the years, the presenter came to accept Ben Harris' ten tasks of supervision as being about the best anyone had done in defining the generalized tasks of most supervisors. Albeit, many supervisors may not perform one or two of them; still, most principals and other supervisors perform most of Harris' ten tasks on a regular basis.

The presenter had struggled for years with conventional theories of motivation and satisfaction. It just did not seem that most professionals were motivated altogether by external pressures as the behaviorists seemed to think. Furthermore, it did not seem as though most or at least some professional people were acting as Maslow's hierarchy of needs indicated that they should. The work of Arthur W. Combs had intrigued me since I was in his graduate classes. Somewhere along the way I read

Frederick Herzberg's theories of motivation and Tom Sergiovanni's applications of them in education. These ideas seemed to make sense to me in the context of what supervisors are trying to do when working with teachers.

THE INSTRUMENTS

The presenter was assisted by over 25 graduate students in identifing the task areas of supervision and the typical behaviors supervisors engage in to accomplish these tasks. Twelve task areas were identified. These were later reduced to eight by combining some of them. Over 300 typical behaviors were identified and later reduced to 132 through use of the Delphi technique. Two forms of the instrument were developed. Form 1 is an ordinal scale and Form 2 is a semantic differential. Both instruments were field tested. Any item that did not account for 25 percent or more of the variance was deleted. Thus, after field testing, 53 triads of items were left. Both instruments yield: a total score; eight subscale scores; three dimensional scores; and, three dimensional scores within each subscale. Form 2 also yields perceptions of or preferences for satisfaction/dissatisfaction, pleasant/unpleasant, and motivating/nonmotivating. Since the two original instruments were developed a third instument, the STDBQ, has been developed for use with student teachers and their supervising teachers. All the instruments, the subscales, and the dimensions have alpha coefficients of .88 or higher. Form 1 and Form 2 correlate with each other

at the .99 level. Complete norming data, scoring information, etc. may be had by calling or writing the presenter.

THE STUDIES

Sistrunk studied the responses of 107 subjects to Form 1 of the SBDQ in 1980. (W. Sistrunk, 1980). He asked respondents their preferences for certain supervisory behaviors. Respondents reported a preference for direction over collaboration in the areas of: curriculum development, instruction, materials and facilities, and community relations. The respondents preferred collaboration to direction in the areas of: staffing, staff development, special student services, and evaluation of instruction. Respondents preferred direction over nondirection in the areas of: instruction, and staff development. They preferred nondirection over direction in the areas of: curriculum, staffing, materials and facilities, special student services, and community relations. Respondents preferred collaboration over nondirection in most of the task areas. Males preferred collaboration more often than females and secondary personnel favored it over elementary ones. Caucasians perceived collaboration and nondirection more favorably than noncaucasians.

Phipps studied the responses of 60 teachers to Subscales 2, 5, and 8 of Form 2 of the SBDQ.(L. Phipps, 1981). Phipps asked teachers which supervisory behaviors

they found most desirable in terms of pleasantness, satisfaction, and motivation. Elementary respondents reported direction as more satisfying, more pleasant, and more motivating than secondary respondents. Females liked direction more than males. Phipps' findings regarding all aspects of supervisory behavior were similar to those of Sistrunk when race was considered as a variable, i. e., noncaucasians perceived nondirection and collaboration less favorably than did caucasians.

Bowen asked 181 vocational educators their perceptions of supervisory behavior. (Bowen, 1982). She found that voc/tech teachers perceive supervisory behaviors as being more directive than do supervisors. Older personnel perceived their supervisors' behavior as being more collaborative than did younger colleagues. When degree level was considered as a variable, those with higher degrees thought that supervision was more directive than did those with lower degrees.

Sistrunk investigated the relationships between community college teachers' perceptions of supervisory behavior and their levels of job satisfaction. (P. Sistrunk, 1982). She had 452 respondents from 16 public community colleges in Ms. She found a positive relationship between the total SBDQ score and the Purdue Subscore of Curriculum Issues. A positive relationship was found between the Directive Dimension and the PTO Factor of Teacher-Supervisor Rapport. Positive relationships were

found between nondirection and the PTO factors of Rapport, Curriculum, and Community Pressures. Positive relationships were found between the SBDQ Collaborative dimension and the PTO factors of: Rapport, Satisfaction with Teaching, and Curriculum. The demographic variables of race, sex, teaching assignment, degree level, etc. each affected the level of job satisfaction; although, some were not significant.

Blackbourn studied the relationship between teachers' perceptions of supervisory behavior and their attitudes toward a post observation conference. (R. Blackbourn, 1983). His population consisted of 338 teachers in a large urban district. Blackbourn used Subscale 8 of Form 1 of the SBDQ which deals with evaluation of instruction. He found that teachers who had more positive attitudes toward a post observation conference tended to perceive their principal's supervisory behavior as being more collaborative. This finding agreed with those of W. Sistrunk in several earlier studies. Elementary teachers reported a more positive attitude toward a post observation conference than secondary teachers.

Vivian investigated the relationship between perceived leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in South Carolina, (T. Vivian, 1983). His subjects were 82 randomly selected teachers in a single S.C. district. He concluded that teacher job satisfaction is higher when the

principal uses a collaborative leadership (supervisory) style.

Ngugi compared senior high school principals' perceptions of their actual supervisory behaviors to teachers' perceptions of both actual and preferred principals' supervisory behaviors. (N. Ngugi, 1984). Her respondents included 71 principals and 275 secondary teachers. She found that principals perceived their supervisory behaviors as both more directive and more collaborative than teachers. Teachers tended to perceive principals' behavior as being more nondirective than principals thought it to be. Teachers preferred that principals be more collaborative than they were and they preferred more direction on all eight subscales than they perceived principals as giving.

Intawongse studied the supervisory behaviors of adult education supervisors. He used Form 2 of the SBDQ in its entirety. (K. Intawongse, 1985). His respondents included 56 supervisors and 132 ABE teachers. He found no differences in the perceptions of teachers and supervisors regarding motivation or satisfaction, direction, collaboration, or nondirection. Caucasian teachers perceived more satisfaction and felt more motivated than noncaucasian teachers in all eight subscale areas.

Miller compared the perceptions of different types of instructors in a military environment. (D. Miller, 1986). The population consisted of 18 civilian, 15 Marine, 78

Navy instructors, and 11 supervisors. The supervisors, the civilian instructors, and the Navy instructors favored a directive style of supervision. The Marine instructors strongly favored a collaborative style of supervision. All tended to prefer a collaborative approach to the evaluation of instruction. Miller expressed considerable surprise at his results, especially the responses of the Marine instructors.

Williams explored the relationship between secondary teachers' perceptions of supervisory behavior and a post observation conference. (R. Williams, 1986). Her population consisted of 120 secondary teachers. She found that teachers' attitudes toward a post observation conference were not influenced by their perceptions of the principal's behavior as directive, collaborative, or nondirective.

SUMMARY

Either form of the SBDQ may be used to determine the perceptions of respondents of their superior's supervisory behavior. Either form can also be used to determine respondents' preferences for directive, collaborative, or nondirective supervisory behavior in each of the eight task areas. Form 2 of the SBDQ can be used to determine those behaviors of supervisors which respondents perceive as satisfying or dissatisfying, motivating or nonmotivating, and pleasant or unpleasant. Both forms of

the instrument have proven to be valuable means of collecting data about supervisory behavior.

Both forms of the SBDQ are copyrighted and so are both forms of the STBDQ. Permission will be granted to anyone wishing to do educational research if the person will write: Walter E. Sistrunk, P.O. Box JG, Ms. State, Ms. 39762. Computer programs are available on discs for using various statistical analyses in analyzing the data collected through use of either form of either instrument. These analyses utilize the SPSS program. There is a small charge for these discs.

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